

HERACLITUS ON CHARACTER.

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PLATONIC GOD-CONCEPTION.

BY THE EDITOR.

IN reply to our question as to the source of the saying ἥθος ἄνθρωπος ἀναιμῶν we have received two replies, one by Professor Greenwood of the mathematical and astronomical department of McKendree College, Lebanon, Ill., and another from J. C. Rappold, M. D., of Brooklyn, New York. The latter informs us on the authority of Dr. Henry Riedel, that it has been used by G. Naudé in his *Apologie pour les grands hommes soupçonnés de magie*, who quotes as follows in Chapter XIII: "Comme parle Apulée, 'singularis praefectus, domesticus speculator, individuus arbiter, inseparabilis testis, malorum improbator, bonorum probator'"; and on page 215, "Ce que est le vrai sens, suivant lequel Apulée disoit que Animus humanus etiam nunc in corpore situs demon nuncupatur, et *Heraclite* que l'esprit de l'homme lui servoit de genie ὥς ἦθος ἀνθρώπου δαίμων." Dr. Rappold adds:

"Reference to the authority of G. Naudé may be found in the *Universal Pronouncing Dictionary* of Thomas, also in a work by L. F. Lélut, *Du Démon de Socrate*, on pages 249 and 250. Gabriel Naudé was born in 1600, was physician ordinary to Louis XIII (1633) and Richelieu, and librarian to Mazarin, 1642. He wrote *Apologie pour les grands hommes faussement accusés de magie*, 1625. A reprint, Amsterdam 1712, can be found in Montague Branch of the Brooklyn Library.

"Dr. Riedel tells me there are several Heraclits but undoubtedly the Ephesian is the one in question. He further claims that the aphorism can not be an inscription as Greek inscriptions do not have breathing marks, and the particle ὥς shows that it is part of a full sentence."

Professor Greenwood refers us to the original source in Greek literature which is Plutarch's "Platonic Questions," one of the most

interesting essays of his *Morals*. There Plutarch quotes it from Heraclitus and the translator, Prof. William W. Goodwin, renders it "Man's genius is a deity." We have looked up the original, and judging from the context would prefer to interpret the meaning to be that man's character is to him his guiding spirit, but Plutarch understands and quotes it in a different sense. He quotes a passage from Plato concerning Socrates who says, "No god bears ill will to man and I also do nothing in ill will, while it is never right for me to countenance a lie or to conceal a truth." Plutarch understands the passage to mean that Socrates looks upon himself as a god and therefore his morality will be divine. But the word "therefore" which in the interest of Plutarch's interpretation has been introduced into the English translation by Professor Goodwin, is missing in the original Greek, a literal quotation from Plato, and Plutarch adds that "other sages too consider man as being God." He quotes, together with the dictum of Heraclitus, Menander's saying

ὁ νοῦς γὰρ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός,

"Our mind is God." The original Greek proves that the words "the God" do not mean any of the Greek deities, but the only true God in the Christian sense. For Plato constantly uses the words "the God" as quite distinct from "god" in the polytheistic sense.

The passage is of special interest because it throws light upon the history of the theological term "God." The truth is that Christianity was more indebted to Greek paganism than is generally conceded, and especially the idea of God as Father, the father of all spirits, of gods (the gods of the Greek pantheon) and of men, has been worked out by Plato, the Platonists, and the Neo-Platonists. Plutarch distinguishes God (whom he calls "*the god*"*) from the gods, by calling the former eternal and creator, while the latter are styled the created gods,—the latter being in every respect similar to the angels and archangels in Christian theology, powerful presences in the spiritual world, as vice versa, the Old Testament sometimes calls spirits *elohim* or gods.

In the same essay in which our quotations occur, Plutarch discusses the fatherhood of God, and the following extracts characterize his views. We quote in Professor Goodwin's translation:

"Is it because he is (as Homer calls him) of created gods and men the father, and of brutes and things that have no soul the maker?"

Having explained that maker and creator are the more general

* ὁ θεός.

terms and father indicates a specific kind, viz., authorship by procreation, he explains the latter as follows:

"The principle and power of the procreator is implanted in the progeny, and contains his nature, the progeny being a piece pulled off the procreator. Since therefore the world is neither like a piece of potter's work nor joiner's work, but there is a great share of life and divinity in it, which God from himself communicated to and mixed with matter, God may properly be called Father of the world—since it has life in it—and also the maker of it."

It is interesting to consider this passage in the light of the Platonic logos theory. The world as a whole is considered (as we know from Philo) as the second God in whom the logos is incarnate. The material world is regarded as being mixed up with evil, for in Platonic philosophy God is spirit, and matter does not partake of the divine nature. The world as a whole, however, is regulated by law and indicates that it is permeated by a divine spirit, and this is the spirit of God himself, or, as St. John the evangelist would say, the son of God. Plutarch explains further details in the concluding words of this chapter:

"Whereas the world consists of two parts, body and soul, God indeed made not the body; but matter being provided, he formed and fitted it, binding up and confining what was infinite within proper limits and figures. But the soul, partaking of mind, reason, and harmony, was not only the work of God, but part of him; not only made by him, but begot by him."

If viewed in the context of Plutarch's expositions, our quotation from Heraclitus means that man's character is God, that it is the divine principle that ensouls humanity. But if we consider that the language of Heraclitus differs from that of Plato, and that he understands by the Greek word *daimon* a spirit or guardian angel, we may well assume that the original purport of the saying is, that the character of man, his habits and disposition, are an influence in his life, such as common belief attributes to man's guardian angel, called *daimon* in ancient Greece.